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Trade union membership

Trade union membership by employment and socio-demographic characteristics such as full-time/part-time, age, industry, occupation, education, earnings

Reference period August 2020

Released 11/12/2020

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Key statistics

- 14% of employees (1.4 million) were trade union members.
- Since 1992, the proportion of employees who were trade union members has fallen from 40% to 14%.
- The Education and Training industry (31%) and the Professionals occupation (21%) had the highest trade union membership.

Prior to August 2020, information on trade union membership was published in [Characteristics of Employment \(/statistics/labour/earnings-and-work-hours/characteristics-employment-australia/aug-2019\)](#).

From August 2020, statistics from the Characteristics of Employment survey are now published in three topic-based releases - this Trade union membership release, as well as:

- [Employee earnings \(/statistics/labour/earnings-and-work-hours/employee-earnings/aug-2020\)](#)
- [Working arrangements \(/statistics/labour/earnings-and-work-hours/working-arrangements/aug-2020\)](#).

Employee earnings, working arrangements and trade union membership data from the Characteristics of employment survey for 2014 to 2020 will be available in [TableBuilder \(<https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/6333.0.00.001Main+Features1August%202019>\)](#) from 16 December 2020. TableBuilder enables the creation of customised tables and graphs.

Trade union members

There were 1.5 million trade union members in August 2020. 12.3% of part-time employees were trade union members compared to 15.3% who worked in full-time jobs.

Trade union membership

	Full-time (%)	Part-time (%)	Total (%)
1986	47.3	40.2	45.6
1992	44.3	25.2	39.6
1998	31.2	20.2	28.1
2004	27.0	17.3	24.1
2010	21.5	15.1	19.5
2016	17.2	12.3	15.6
2018	16.0	11.8	14.6
2020	15.3	12.3	14.3

Trade union membership tends to increase with age. In August 2020 only 5% of employees aged 15-19 years and 6% aged 20-24 were trade union members. This increased to 23% for

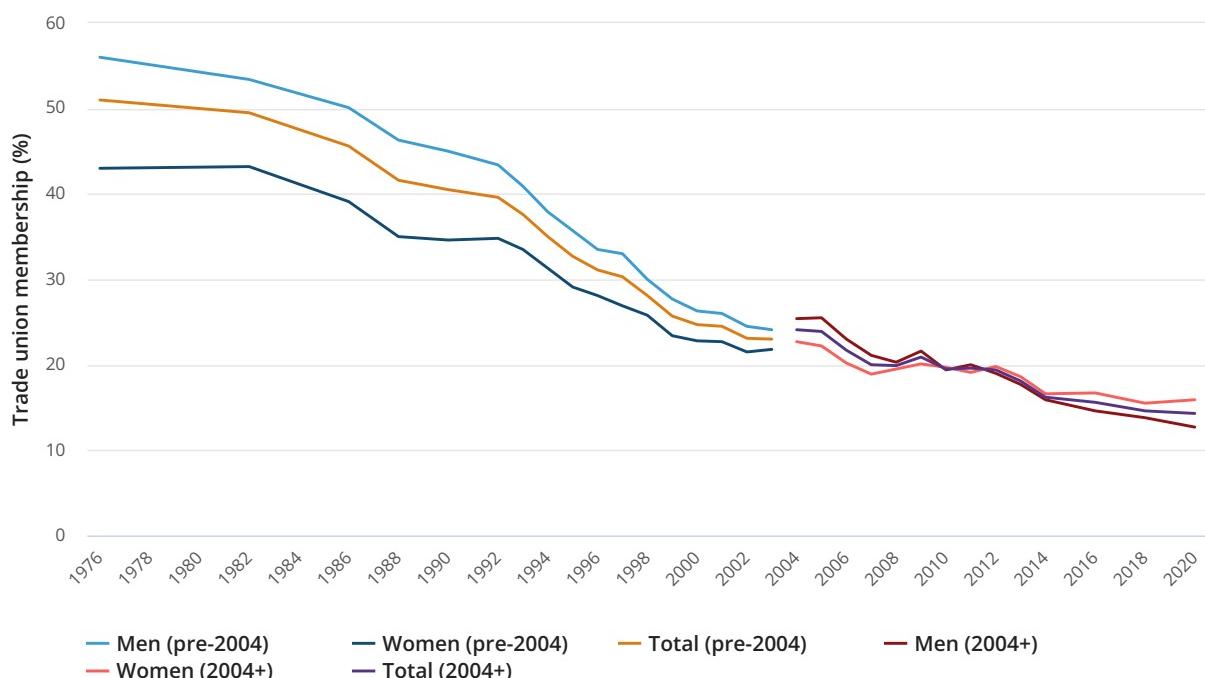
employees aged 55-59 and 25% for employees aged 60-64.

Trade union membership over time

Of the 10.4 million employees in August 2020, 14.3% were a member of a trade union in their main job. This is a decrease from the 14.6% recorded in August 2018.

Trade union membership has generally declined since 1992. From 1992 to 2020, the proportion of employees who were trade union members has fallen from 40% to 14% (from 43% to 13% for men and 35% to 16% for women).

Trade union membership by sex



Sources: 1. [Trade Union Members, Australia](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6325.0) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6325.0>) (1976-1996) 2. [Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership, Australia](https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/allprimarymainfeatures/3AC58BDF664E8ED5CA256FCB00735B35?opendocument) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/allprimarymainfeatures/3AC58BDF664E8ED5CA256FCB00735B35?opendocument>) (1997-2003), 3. [Characteristics of Employment, Australia](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/earnings-and-work-hours/characteristics-employment-australia/latest-release) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/earnings-and-work-hours/characteristics-employment-australia/latest-release>) (2004-2020)

Notes: 1. pre-2004 series: includes Owner Managers of Incorporated Enterprises (OMIEs), 2. 2004+ series: excludes OMIEs, 3. The ABS plans to produce historically comparable estimates for the pre-2004 period, excluding OMIEs, in the future.

Trade union membership history

The majority of trade union members held membership for 5 years or more.

Women made up a greater proportion of trade union membership (55%) than men (45%).

Duration of trade union membership

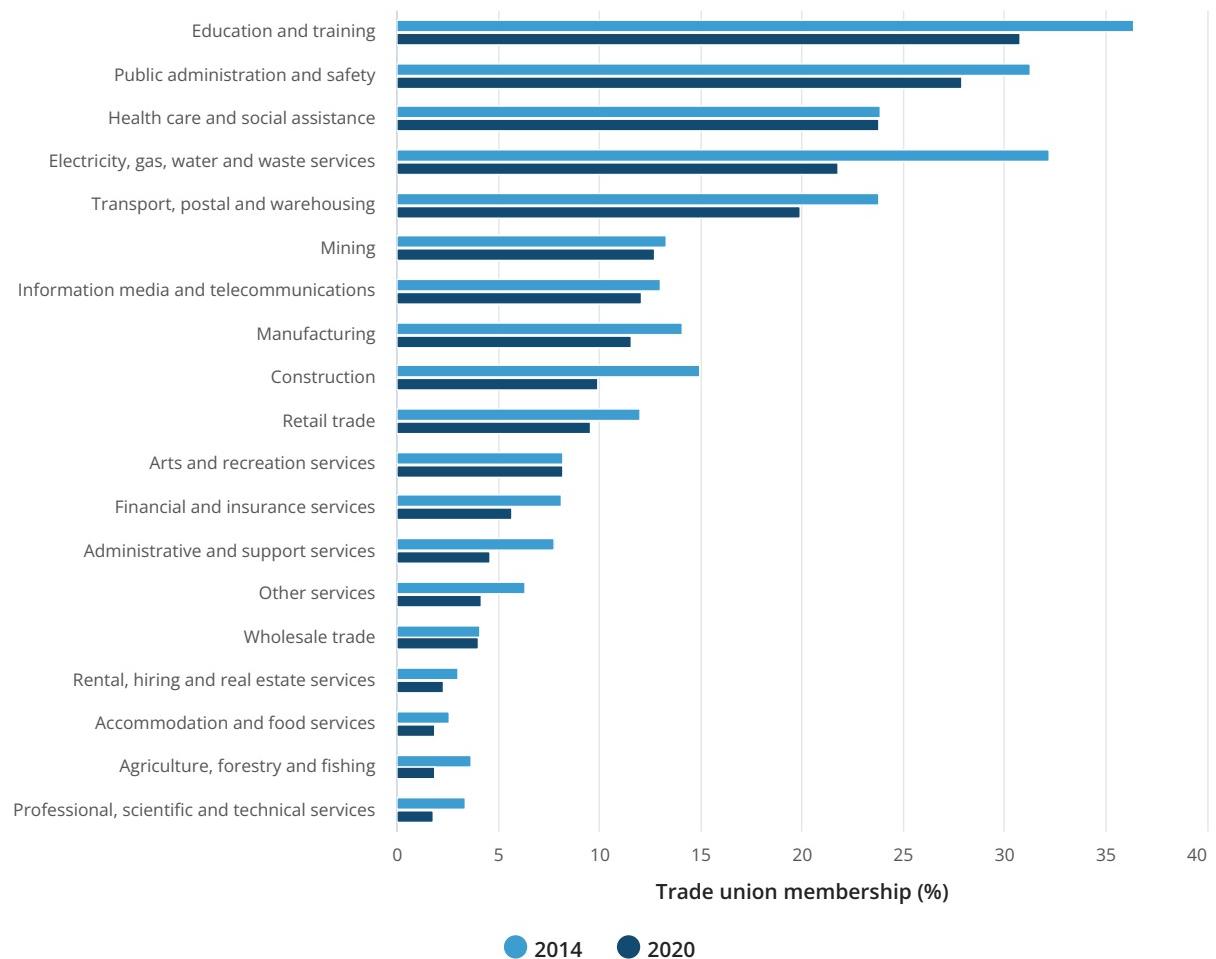
	Fewer than 5 years ('000)	5 years or more ('000)	Total ('000)
Men	198.6	470.2	668.8
Women	266.9	556.5	823.4
Total	465.5	1,026.8	1,492.3

Industry

The industries with the highest proportion of employees who were trade union members were:

- Education and training (31%)
- Public administration and safety (28%)
- Health care and social assistance (24%).

Trade union membership, by industry



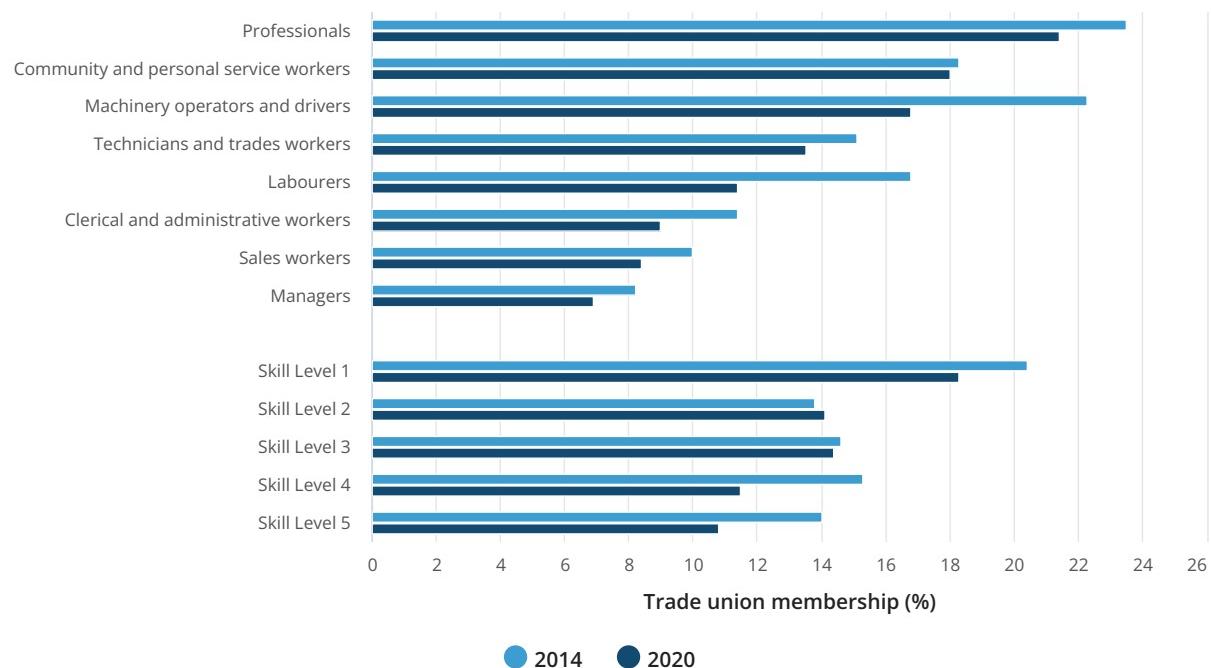
1. For more information on Industries, refer to [Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification \(ANZSIC\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/1292.0) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/1292.0>).

Occupation

The occupations which recorded the highest proportion of employees who were Trade Union members were:

- Professionals (21%)
- Community and Personal Service Workers (18%)
- Machinery operators and drivers (17%).

Trade union membership, by occupation and skill level

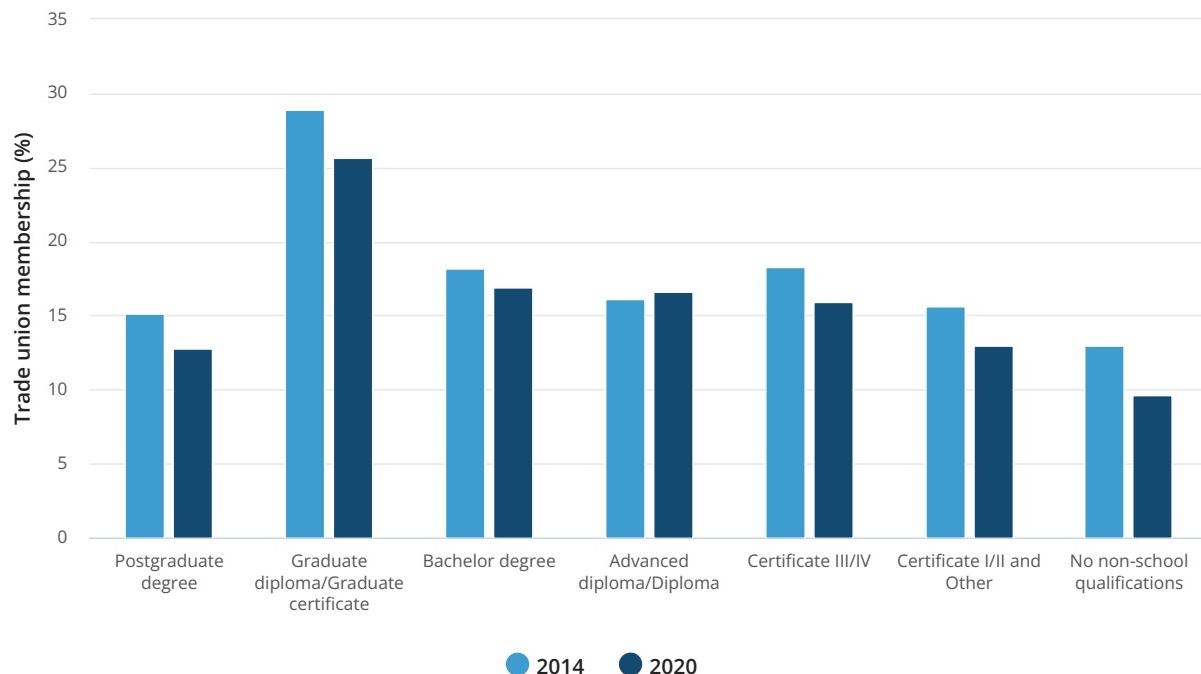


1. Data is coded to ANZSCO ver 1.2. For more information on Occupations and Skill level, refer to [ANZSCO - Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations \(<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/1220.0Chapter32013,%20Version%201.3>\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/1220.0Chapter32013,%20Version%201.3).

Educational attainment

Trade union membership was considerably more prevalent for employed people with a Graduate Diploma or Graduate certificate (26%), than for other qualifications. Trade union membership was lowest amongst those without non-school qualifications (10%). Trade union membership was slightly higher for people with a Postgraduate degree (13%) or a Bachelor degree (17%).

Trade union membership, by educational attainment

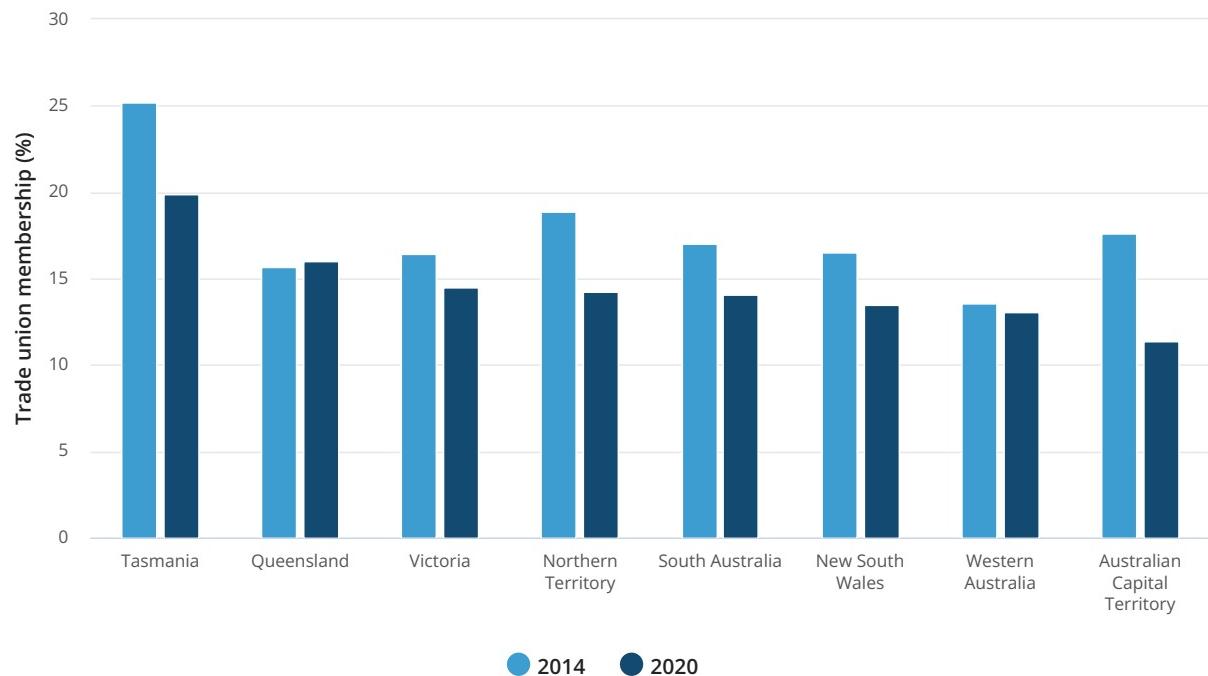


1. For more information on educational attainment, refer to [Australian Standard Classification of Education \(ASCED\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@_nsf/mf/1272.0) (https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@_nsf/mf/1272.0).

State and territory

Tasmania had the highest proportion (20%) of employees who were trade union members, while Western Australia and the ACT had the lowest (13% and 11% respectively).

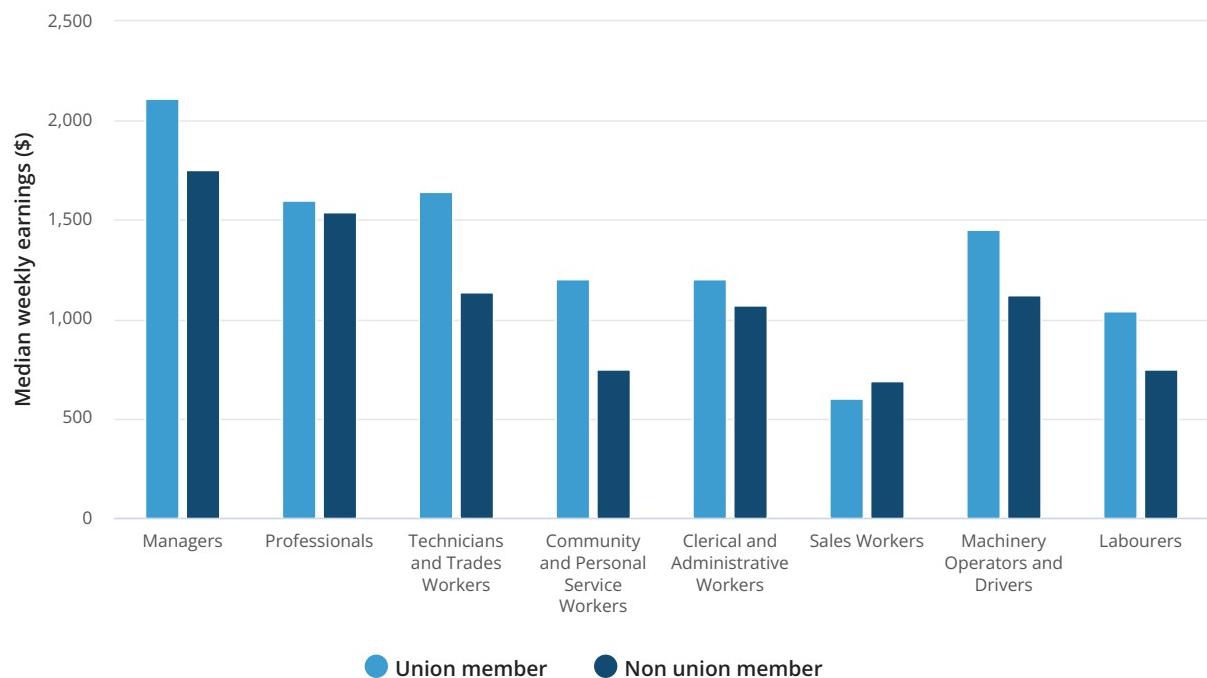
Trade union membership, by state and territory



Earnings

The median weekly earnings for employees who were trade union members in their main job were \$1,450 per week, compared with \$1,100 for employees who were not a trade union member.

Median weekly earnings, by union membership in main job



Job characteristics

Of the employees who were trade union members only 8% were casual employees (employees without leave entitlements).

	Trade union member in main job ('000)	Not a trade union member ('000)	Total employees ('000)
Without paid leave entitlements	91.0	1,953.2	2,281.6
Less than 12 months in current job	95.7	1,631.8	1,912.3
Not guaranteed a minimum number of weekly hours	145.1	1,798.7	2,128.7

Data downloads

Table 1d - Median Earnings by full-time or part-time, state and trade union members in main job

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[266.5 KB]

Table 3 - Distribution of earnings for employees by industry

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[308 KB]

Table 4 - Distribution of earnings for employees by occupation and skill level

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[185 KB]

Table 5 - Distribution of earnings for employees by educational qualification

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[172.5 KB]

Table 12 - Median Earning for employees by duration (length) of current trade union membership

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[186.5 KB]

Table 14 - Median earnings for employees by trade union membership

[!\[\]\(f2b341b2842f84b06275b7e52ec9f0ae_img.jpg\) Download XLS](#)
[222 KB]

All 2020 data cubes

[!\[\]\(5a09a9dfd2f1e923eccb8c24714edf51_img.jpg\) Download ZIP](#)
[335.62 KB]

Historical data: Table 12 - Median earnings for employees by duration (length) of current trade union membership

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[114.72 KB]

Historical data: Table 3 - Distribution of earnings for employees by industry

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[462.9 KB]

Historical data: Table 4 - Distribution of earnings for employees by occupation and skill level

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[278.88 KB]

Historical data: Table 5 - Distribution of earnings for employees by educational qualification

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[251.72 KB]

[Previous catalogue number](#)

- This release uses ABS catalogue number 6335.0*.
- Data from this release was previously published in [Characteristics of Employment](https://author.absweb.aws.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/earnings-and-work-hours/characteristics-employment-australia/aug-2019) (<https://author.absweb.aws.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/earnings-and-work-hours/characteristics-employment-australia/aug-2019>) (catalogue number 6333.0**).

Prior to 2014, trade union membership statistics were published in [Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership, Australia](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6310.0) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6310.0>) (catalogue number 6310.0).

Prior to 1999, trade union membership statistics were published in [Trade Union Members, Australia](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6325.0) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6325.0>) (catalogue number 6325.0).

*Note: Catalogue number 6336.0 was previously used [Working Conditions, Australia](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6335.0) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6335.0>), Feb to May 1979.

**Note: Catalogue number 6333.0 was previously used for [Working Conditions, Australia \(Preliminary\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/6335.0Feb-May%201979?OpenDocument) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/6335.0Feb-May%201979?OpenDocument>), Feb to May 1979.

Methodology

[Characteristics of Employment, Australia methodology, August 2020](#)